

## Message Text

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70

ACTION AF-18

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R 051600Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3734

INFO AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY LUANDA

AMEMBASSY LORENCO MARQUES

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

C O N F I D E N T I A L C A P E T O W N 0 0 8 7

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SF

SUBJECT: GENERAL ELECTION SET FOR APRIL: BACKGROUND

AND COMMENT

REF: CAPE TOWN 0080 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: NATIONAL PARTY WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY WIN EASY

VICTORY IN APRIL GENERAL ELECTION. ALTHOUGH THERE WILL

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BE NO CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT, POST-ELECTION PERIOD COULD BE

ONE OF SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA. STRAINS WITHIN OPPOSITION UNITED PARTY COULD END IN A SPLIT. POLITICAL REALIGNMENT, ESPECIALLY OF LIBERAL ELEMENTS IN SA, POSSIBLE. BUT OF MORE SIGNIFICANCE WILL BE WHETHER, AS SOME PREDICT, VORSTER GOVERNMENT WILL TAKE IMPORTANT NEW INITIATIVES IN RACE RELATIONS, WHILE AT SAME TIME CONTINUING TO SUPPRESS CERTAIN OF ITS ACTIVIST OPPONENTS. END SUMMARY

1. DURING HIS FEBRUARY 4 RESPONSE IN PARLIAMENT TO NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION BY LEADER OF OPPOSITION SIR DE VILLIERS GRAAFF, PRIME MINISTER VORSTER ANNOUNCED THAT GENERAL ELECTION WILL BE HELD APRIL 24 (REFTEL).

2. PRESIDENT FOUCHE'S ADDRESS AT OPENING OF PARLIAMENT (CAPE TOWN 0077, NOTAL) AND SPEECHES BY LEADER OF OPPOSITION AND PRIME MINISTER DURING FIRST DAY OF NO-CONFIDENCE DEBATE HAVE INDICATED PROBABLE LINE OF ATTACK THE TWO MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES WILL DIRECT AT EACH OTHER. OPPOSITION UNITED PARTY (UP) WILL TAKE POSITION THAT RULING NATIONAL PARTY'S DOMESTIC POLICIES HAVE MADE SOUTH AFRICA MORE ISOLATED FROM REST OF WORLD AND MORE VULNERABLE THAN EVER BEFORE. SAG POLICIES, IT WILL BE CHARGED, HAVE ALSO CONTRIBUTED TO ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY AND INFLATION, WHICH JEOPARDIZE ECONOMIC WELFARE OF WHITES. NATIONAL PARTY (NP) WILL POINT TO WHAT IT HAS ACCOMPLISHED FOR WHITE ELECTORATE, DEFEND APARTHEID AS ONLY POSSIBLE SOLUTION TO RACE PROBLEM, ATTACK UP'S FEDERAL PLAN, INSIST THAT SCHISMATIC UP UNFIT TO GOVERN, AND REPRESENT ITSELF AS MOST ABLE DEFENDER OF WHITE SOUTH AFRICA IN THESE TROUBLED TIMES.

3. ELECTION ITSELF OF SOME INTEREST. OUT OF IT WILL COME SOME NEW FACES IN PARLIAMENT, WHICH PERHAPS WILL HAVE SLIGHTLY MORE MODERN, MORE MODERATE OUTLOOK. HOWEVER, THERE WILL BE NO BASIC CHANGE IN WHO WIELDS POLITICAL POWER IN SOUTH AFRICA. NATIONAL PARTY, AS WE HAVE REPORTED PREVIOUSLY, FULLY EXPECTED TO WIN HANDILY. IN LIGHT OF PRESENT POLITICAL SITUATION, WHICH UNLIKELY UNDERGO MUCH TRANSFORMATION BEFORE ELECTION, NP SHOULD MAINTAIN OR EVEN INCREASE THE MORE THAN TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY IT NOW COMMANDS IN PARLIAMENT. THUS, NP GOVERNMENT WILL RETAIN VIRTUALLY CONFIDENTIAL

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UNLIMITED POWER TO LEGISLATE AS IT DESIRES.

4. WHAT IS OF IMPORTANCE, THEN, IS NOT ELECTION RETURNS BUT WHAT FOLLOWS. ALREADY SPECULATION IS GROWING THAT AFTER UP SUFFERS ITS SEVENTH CONSECUTIVE GENERAL ELECTION DEFEAT SINCE 1948, IT WILL BE RESHAPE. IF, AS MANY EXPECT, GRAAFF STEPS DOWN, LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES IN UP WILL VIE FOR CONTROL OF PARTY. IT POSSIBLE THAT,

BECAUSE OF APPARENTLY IRRECONCILABLE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ITS OPPOSING FACTIONS, UP COULD FALL APART AND CEASE TO EXIST IN ITS PRESENT FORM. SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE MAJOR REALIGNMENT OF WHITE POLITICAL STRUCTURE INVOLVING ESPECIALLY A COALESCENCE OF VERLIGTE (LIBERAL) ELEMENTS IS INEVITABLE.

5. BE THAT AS IT MAY, ONE THING IS CERTAIN: NATIONAL PARTY WILL CONTINUE TO GOVERN AND FORCES WITHIN IT AND WITHIN AFRIKANERDOM WILL BE VITAL FACTOR IN, THOUGH BY NO MEANS SOLE DETERMINANT OF, FUTURE OF SOUTH AFRICA. IN MAKING THE DECISIONS AND ENACTING THE LAWS NP WILL BE, HOWEVER UNWILLINGLY, MORE NOW THAN IN MANY YEARS INFLUENCED NOT ONLY BY PRESENCE BUT ALSO BY ACTIONS AND INCHOATE POWER OF BLACK PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY. NEXT YEAR OR SO SHOULD MORE CLEARLY DEFINE EXTENT TO WHICH NP IS WILLING TO BE RESPONSIVE TO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL NEEDS OF SOUTH AFRICAN BLACKS.

6. AS FOR POLITICAL ACCOMMODATION WITH BLACKS, ALTHOUGH THERE HAS BEEN GROWING AGREEMENT AMONG WHITE LIBERALS AND AMONG SOME BLACKS THAT SOME SORT OF FEDERAL OR CONFEDERAL ARRANGEMENT IS KEY TO A PEACEFUL SOLUTION OF SOUTH AFRICA'S RACE PROBLEM, NP NOW ON RECORD AS BEING FIRMLY OPPOSED TO IDEA. DURING HIS SPEECH IN PARLIAMENT FEBRUARY 4 (DETAILS BY AIRGRAM), VORSTER STATED THAT POLITICAL FEDERATION WOULD MEAN DEVOLUTION OF PORTION ON WHITE SOVEREIGNTY AND THAT HE, THEREFORE, REJECTED IT. BEFORE ANY KIND OF FEDERATION COULD BE CONSIDERED, SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT WOULD HAVE TO BE CARRIED TO A POINT WHERE BLACK NATIONS (BUT DEFINITELY NOT ONE UNITED BLACK NATION) WERE INDEPENDENT. THEN AN ECONOMIC BLOC OF SEPARATE, INDEPENDENT STATES OF SOUTHERN AFRICA COULD BE FORMED.

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7. DESPITE VORSTER'S CATEGORICAL REJECTION OF ANY SHARING OF POLITICAL POWER, IT IS TRUE THAT FORCES FOR CHANGE, ESPECIALLY REGARDING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL WELFARE OF BLACKS, PERSIST AND ARE HAVING SOME EFFECT. NOT ENOUGH, IT MUST BE EMPHASIZED, TO HAVE MADE APPRECIABLE DIFFERENCE YET IN DAILY EXISTENCE OF MOST BLACKS IN SA. BUT ENOUGH TO BE SAID TO CONSTITUTE THE BEGINNINGS OF REAL CHANGE IN SA IF-- AND THIS IS A BIG, UNANSWERED IF--THE NP IS READY TO FACE REALITIES OF TIMES AND BEGIN TO SHOW A WISDOM ITS PAROCHIALLY-MINDED WHITE SUPREMacists HAVE SADLY LACKED FOR SO LONG. IN THIS REGARD, NP'S ELECTION CAMPAIGN RHETORIC, WHICH HARDLY

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## Message Attributes

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